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SOFTWARE

10 Warning Signs You're In A Bad Payment Processing Relationship

How To Identify And Eliminate Your FEC's Biggest Merchant Services Vulnerabilities

How To Know It's Time For A Change?

Introduction

As a busy family entertainment venue operator, you have to manage **a lot** of relationships - with your staff, guests, and vendors. One of the relationships that can impact your facility negatively is often one that operators are reluctant to address - the merchant services relationship. A few years ago, clients began sharing that credit card processing had become a huge pain point.

It was time for CenterEdge to do something to help. Since 2019, the CenterEdge team has heavily invested in untangling the payment processing landscape to better provide clients with the tools and education needed to solve one of their biggest challenges. We learned the ten warning signs that could indicate that you're in a lousy merchant services set up and what you can do about it.

1 The Statement Is Overly Complicated

Many processing companies lack transparency, creating overly complicated statements. This makes it difficult for you to manage what you can't understand and hard to know where you could be overpaying. This often leads to losing trust in your vendor. With statements as ambiguous as they are, it becomes easier just to ignore the situation, which can ultimately hurt your bottom line.

You shouldn't have to worry whether you can trust one of your business's most critical partnerships.

2 The Fees Are Creeping Up

Rate creep is one of the most significant issues merchants have with payment processors. You may have been told you were getting a low rate, but they don't tell you that you're also being charged various fees on top of that "low rate." For example, you might be assessed fees for receiving statements, customer support, or even having the account at all.

Hidden fees can creep in without you noticing due to statement complexity. Regularly review your statements to watch for those hidden fees or "value-added" programs that you're not actually getting value from.

Some of the most common:

Annual fee: charged every year to cover the basic use of a provider's services. This fee may be rolled into a monthly fee or called out as an annual fee.

Monthly fee: charged each month, usually to cover call center costs.

Customer support fee: a monthly support fee charged to use the customer service line or department. Could also be charged an hourly fee for certain services.

Statement fee: charged to cover printing and mailing costs for credit card statements. Some merchants bypass these costs by choosing to receive electronic statements, but others pay as much as $15 a month for miscellaneous statement costs.

Online reporting or access fee: alternatives to statement fees, charged to merchants who choose to view their statements online.

PCI Compliance: a fee charged by the processor to maintain compliance with the PCI-DSS standards. This fee may or may not include a service to assist merchants with their annual reporting.

PCI Non-Compliance: charged by your processor when you don't comply with PCI Standards. In the case of non-compliance, you must pay because your business is not upholding PCI standards, which could cost you even more money in the long run.

IRS reporting fee: charged by your processor to validate your gross annual processing amounts and provide that information to you for tax purposes.

Regulatory Fees: sometimes similar to the IRS reporting fee charged by the processor, but generally assessed to make sure clients are following the regulatory standards of the industry.

3 The Pricing Structure Is Unstable

Your credit card processing program should support your business's operational practices. For example, you might wish to absorb some or all of the costs associated with processing cards with a standard pricing program, or you might instead want to offset those costs and offer cash discounts by implementing a dual pricing program. No matter how you want to manage merchant services, you need a stable, transparent structure.

Additionally, at times you may inadvertently set up procedures that can impact a transaction's risk factor and cause rate fluctuations without your knowledge. For example, operationally, you might wish for your point of sale to make multiple attempts to process a customer's card for a recurring billing payment or a membership renewal. However, you are charged for each of those credit card processing attempts.

An in-house processor integrated with your point of sale can review common transactions and architect the payment transactions inside the point of sale to ensure that you reach the right balance of convenience and cost. Even when third-party processors do provide transaction oversight like this, it can take a significant amount of time to make these kinds of development updates between systems.

4 Your Processor Is Not In-Step With The Features Of Your Point Of Sale System

As the family entertainment industry continues to evolve, your needs will change as you develop new programs, products, or payment options to meet your guests' needs. You need a processor that can help you anticipate and develop payment technology proactively to meet those needs.

An in-house processor can guarantee that you will have the necessary support as new software features are developed. For example, as you begin to offer programs like memberships, you'll need a secure way to take payment online or onsite without worrying about a negative impact on your rates. While integration with other processors typically exists, features are always guaranteed to be compatible with the in-house solution at feature launch.

5 You Have Different Processors For eCommerce And Onsite Transactions

Similarly to when your processing partner is not in-sync with your software provider, having multiple payment processors for eCommerce, on-premise, and self-service kiosk transactions can create complications for you.

Not only do you risk feature gaps between the different systems and providers, but reporting is at best piecemeal and, at worst, incomplete. When you need to review income versus fees paid, you don't have time to sift through *multiple* overly-complicated statements to understand your income. A single processor for your entire business can streamline this for you, reducing time spent analyzing statements so you can manage your business more efficiently.

Having a single processor can also streamline your experience and reduce friction for your guests. For example, let's say that a guest purchases a membership and sets up their recurring billing payment account online. Once they arrive at your facility the first time, they simply receive their membership card, wristband, or other reusable media. They can use that media to securely purchase additional attractions, food and beverage, or merchandise without having to present their card each time. This creates an omnichannel tokenization experience, meaning that tokens created at one application (eCommerce, onsite, or self-service kiosk) are *easily* and *securely* transitioned throughout your business, creating a seamless guest experience.

Take Their Word For It...

"CenterEdge has been some of the best and most helpful team members I've worked with. I really appreciate how accommodating you all have been, [going] above and beyond to make sure that our system is ready to go for opening. Switching to CenterEdge was one of the best decisions we made."

ZACH JOHNSON
GENERAL MANAGER, REV'D UP FUN

6 You're Worried About Processing Security

One of the major challenges of card acceptance is the risk and liability, which falls on the merchant. Dealing with PCI Compliance regulations and mandates can be difficult and time-consuming, to say the least. A processor that does not keep up with the latest payment technology and hardware requirements may not have your best interests in mind. Payment technologies like EMV, NFC, and other contactless payment forms are a critical component of maintaining PCI compliance and help reduce the risk of fraud.

While ultimately, it's the merchant's responsibility to ensure annual compliance questionnaires are submitted timely, a great processing partner sends reminders and informs you of changes in standards so that you maintain the highest level of compliance.

Incidents like data breaches can be costly in terms of money, time, and - more importantly - reputation. Your processing partner must keep up to date with the right compliance standards, technology updates, and devices that will keep you processing in a secure environment. Some merchant services sales reps will try to sway you with the promise of free equipment, but what they may not tell you is that the "free" devices you get today may already be, or will soon be, out of compliance.

Your point of sale provider should be providing you with the tools and technology that offer you the best in payment security.

Your Advantage point of sale stations and Advantage eCommerce site offers end-to-end encryption. This means that cardholder data is encrypted at the point of payment to the solution provider's secure environment, where it is then decrypted. CenterEdge Software maintains the highest level of PCI DSS compliance.
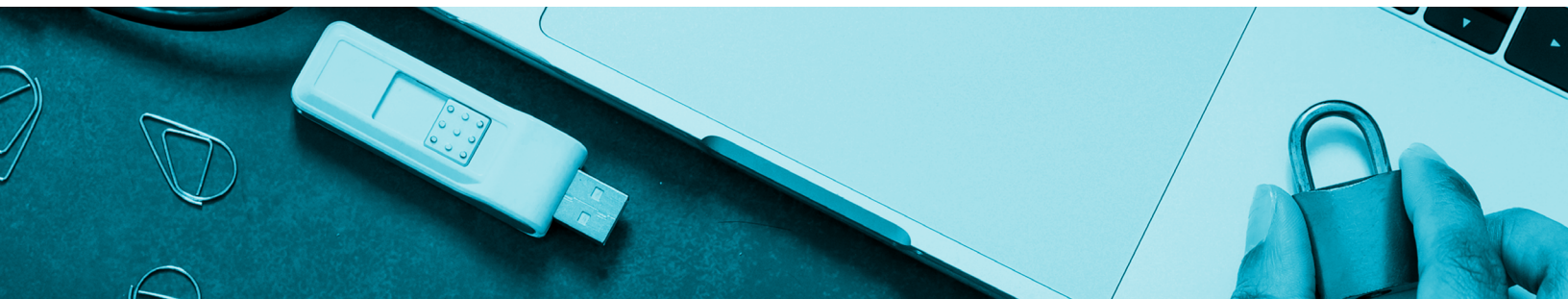
7 You Want Built-In Fraud Detection Programs

Merchant fraud monitoring programs can be expensive, but you want a provider to be vigilant on your behalf without the need to seek out a third-party solution. Many processors only review eCommerce transactions for CVV match, and don't proactively look for ways to prevent fraud on your behalf.

A processor that automatically scores, flags, and helps you prevent potentially fraudulent transactions before they post to your account is essential in helping you mitigate risk.

The best partners will work with you to determine your business's preferred fraud risk level to flag transactions as high risk when they reach certain monitoring thresholds. They can also add an additional layer of security by monitoring their entire client network to determine if a card has been used fraudulently across other sites in their network - all automatically at the time of the transaction.

8 You Can't Get Anyone On The Phone

There may be nothing worse when you're in the throes of a major payment issue than not being able to reach anyone for support. Cash flow is an essential part of every business's success, so missing transactions or deposits need to be the least of your concerns. A system-wide processor outage that prohibits you from accepting credit cards will cost your business money and cause customer friction. You need to be able to resolve these issues quickly should they arise.

The reality of the payments landscape is that providers are being bought and sold all the time. Because of this, you might not even know who to call or whether they'll be available to help you if you do manage to get through. Credit card processing has become commoditized; therefore, customer service is often pushed to the wayside. That just doesn't work on a busy Saturday when you have an issue.

The right merchant services provider offers customer and technical support for no additional charge and has support availability in-sync with your business operations. Peak hours and holiday support (without extra fees!) are essential when your business is open and you need an answer now.

9 You're Sick Of Not Knowing Who To Call

When you're having an issue with a payment or have questions about transactions, it's not always evident if you should call your point of sale provider or your payment processor. And no one likes waiting on hold with the processor only to find out there's an issue with how a team member has been entering sales, resulting in another call to your software provider to identify the issue.

You already know that you don't want separate providers for food and beverage, party booking, scheduling, and eCommerce, so it's no surprise that your business could benefit from streamlining your payment processes. Not only will this help you save precious time contacting the right partner when there's an issue, but it will also give you increased visibility into the sales, revenue, and operating fees associated with running your facility.

10 You Wish You Had A Payments Partner You Could Trust

As helpful as it is to streamline your relationships so that you only have one partner to call when there are issues, what's really important is that you have the confidence that the partner is someone you can trust. A custom-built payment processor for the family entertainment industry better understands your unique business and needs. One that has demonstrated its commitment to your continued success ensures that you have a partner who keeps your best interests in mind. A big part of being able to trust your provider comes down to transparency.

A provider you can trust will offer you a transparent approach to your operation's fees and provide pricing program options that meet your needs now, and in the future. They will provide you with statements that are clear and easy to understand, without hidden fees that continue to creep in the wrong direction. And they will help you stay current on changing compliance and technology standards. You'll receive reminders that prevent you from being charged for increased risk factors, and they will architect the design of their software and service in such a way that guarantees you're receiving the best rates possible. In short, they'll have your back.

Take Their Word For It...

"We're looking forward to streamlining our business operations using CenterEdge, so we're able to focus on our number one priority: our customers. By implementing this software, our managers and employees are empowered to provide unparalleled experiences to the families visiting The City Forum without creating operational bottlenecks. We're excited to have a software solution as diverse as our business concepts and well-suited to handle every bit of our daily routine, from sales and labor tracking to inventory control, party bookings, and more."

DANA KNOTT
OWNER, THE CITY FORUM

Next Steps

For nearly 20 years, CenterEdge has been here to support the amusement and family entertainment center industry in delivering world-class experiences for families everywhere. This partnership remains strong with both our software and merchant services clients through our dedicated support hours when you need us, delivery of the tools and resources that help you maximize your system and operating efficiency, and by the close relationship we invite you to share with us.

We understand that payment processing can be a major friction point that costs you time and money, and *we can help.*

CenterEdge Payments is an integrated and simplified credit card processing solution for the family and location-based entertainment center, water park, amusement park, and specialty attraction industry. We provide flexible pricing options, such as Dual Pricing or Interchange Plus, to give merchants greater control over their processing fees, as well as full integration with the CenterEdge Advantage Suite of software. Contact us today to learn how CenterEdge Payments can help reduce your pain with lower rates, a transparent, honest approach, and the support from the same CenterEdge team that has been helping the industry since 2003. Because helping you serve your guests, manage your costs, and operate securely and efficiently is what we do.

Interested in seeing how CenterEdge can help reduce your processing costs and offer you a better merchant experience? *Get your free program analysis today.*

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Happy Team. Happy Guests.™

CenterEdge is a leading US-based provider of point-of-sale solutions, secure payment processing, and business excellence mentoring that streamlines full-facility management across multi-attraction amusement parks and entertainment centers. Through proven feature-rich software solutions, entertainment and service expertise, and a true partnership approach, CenterEdge helps entrepreneurs run successful businesses, become pillars in their communities, and offer the best guest, team, and owner experience.

EXPLORE MORE

Contact us at info@centeredgesoftware.com
to learn how we can streamline your operations!